

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJECT: DISSIDENT OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP GAINS OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

1. SUMMARY. THROUGH AN APPARENT FAILURE TO ADHERE STRICTLY TO ELECTORAL LAW ABETTED BY THEIR OWN INEPTITUDE, THE LEADERS OF THE MAJORITY FACTIONS OF THE LIBERAL AND RADICAL LIBERAL PARTIES (PL AND PLR) HAVE BEEN DENIED OFFICIAL RECOGNITION, AND HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY MINORITY FACTIONS IN EACH PARTY. THOSE OUSTED ARE CLAIMING THAT THE GOP ENGINEERED THE WHOLE THING, AND THAT THEIR HUMAN AND POLITICAL RIGHTS ARE BEING TRAMPLED UNDER. THE GOP CERTAINLY HAS BEEN QUICK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION BUT IN THE END MAY REGRET NOT HAVING STAYED OUT OF AN INTERNECINE DISPUTE AMONG THE LIBERALS, SINCE THE FACADE OF A LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION WHICH THE GOP HAS SOUGHT TO CREATE HAS NOW BEEN SHATTERED. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PL AND PLR LEADERSHIP, WHICH USED TO INDULGE FREELY IN MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS (THE PL CHARGING THE PLR WITH BEING CRYPT-COMMUNISTS AND THE PLR ACCUSING THE PL OF BEING STOOGES OF THE GOP), FOUND A COMMON CAUSE LAST YEAR IN OPPOSING GOP MOVES TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW STROESSNER IN EFFECT TO BECOME PRESIDENT FOR LIFE. OUT OF THIS CAME A JOINT CONVENTION IN EARLY 1977, WHICH FORMED

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A COMMON DIRECTORATE AND RESOLVED THAT THE TWO BRANCHES OF PARAGUAYAN LIBERALISM WOULD REUNITE LATER IN THE YEAR UNDER THE LABEL OF THE UNITED LIBERAL PARTY (PLU). THE REUNIFICATION MOVE, HOWEVER, WAS OPPOSED BY DISSIDENT FACTIONS IN BOTH PARTIES, LEED IN THE CASE OF THE PL BY A MAVERICK OPPORTUNIST, FULVIO HUGO CELAURO, AND IN THE CASE OF THE PLR BY ITS FORMER HEAD JUST PASTOR ENITEZ, AN ALCHOLIC (AND REPORTED MENTALLY

UNBALANCED) SCHOOL TEACHER. THE DISSIDENTS SUBSEQUENTLY HELD THEIR OWN CONVENTIONS, ELECTING SEPARATE DIRECTORATES WHO THEN APPLIED TO THE ELECTION BOARD FOR RECOGNITION AS THE LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES.

3. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING THE LEADERS OF THE PL AND PLR MAJORITY FACTIONS FEARED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INTERVENE ON THE SIDE OF THE DISSIDENTS, EVEN THOUGH THEY SEEMED TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE BULK OF PARAGUAY'S LIBERS AND CONTROLLED THE OUTSPOKEN WEEKLY "EL RADICAL". AT THE SAME TIME, WHILE PUBLICLY DECLARING THEIR FEALTY TO EACH OTHER, THESE PL AND PLR LEADERS SEPARATELY ASSERTED TO US THEIR HOPE THAT FORMATION OF THE PLU WOULD AFFORD THEM THE MEANS TO OUST THEIR OSTENSIBLE PARTNERS AND BECOME THE SOLE SPOKESMEN FOR PARAGUAYAN LIBERALISM.

4. THESE ILLUSIONS OF UNITY AND/OR SUPREMACY WERE EXPLODED ON JUNE 27 WHEN THE CENTRAL ELECTION BOARD, A GOVERNMENT ENTITY DOMINATED BY THE OFFICIAL COLORADO PARTY, DECIDED TO GRANT RECOGNITION TO THE CELAURO AND BENITEZ DIRECTORATES, AS BEING THE ONLY LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES RESPECTIVELY OF THE PL AND PLR. THE BOARD FOUND THAT THE BYLAWS OF NEITHER THE PL NOR THE PLR PROVIDED FOR REUNIFICATION OF ONE PARTY WITH THE OTHER (COMMENT: NEITHER DO THEY PROHIBIT IT); AND THAT ONLY THE CELAURO AND BENITEZ FACTIONS HAD PRESENTED SINGLE-PARTY LEADERSHIP LISTS FOR CERTIFICATION BY THE BOARD, SUBSEQUENT TO THIS DECISION, WHICH HAS BEEN CONTESTED ON SEVERAL GROUNDS

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(INCLUDING LACK OF QUORUM, DELIBERATE LOSS OF DOCUMENTS, ETC.), LEGAL ACTION INITIATED BY CELAURO AND BENITEZ RESULTED THIS WEEK IN COURT ORDERS CLOSING THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE PL AND PLR AND SUSPENDING PUBLICATION OF "EL RADICAL". THE MAJORITY FACTIONS OF THE PL AND PLR NOW HAVE NEITHER LAIR NOR VOICE.

5. ASSUMING THE ELECTION BOARDS'S RULING IS NOT REVERSED, THE PLU WOULD BE FACED WITH A TWO YEAR HIATUS IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY, SINCE UNDER THE ELECTORAL LAW A NEW POLITICAL GROUPING MUST WAIT THAT LONG AFTER IT HASB EEN LEGALIZED BEFORE PRESENTING CANDIDATES. (RECOGNITION IS GIVE BY THE ELECTORAL BOARD ON THE BASIS OF THE PRESENTATION OF 10,000 CERTIFIED SIGNATURES. SINCE THE MAJORITY PL AND PLR FACTIONS ARE TRYING TO CONTEST THE BOARDS'S DECISION AND MATAIN THEY STILL LEAGALLY REPRESENT THEIR RESPECTIVE MEMBERSHIPS, THEY AHVE NOT YET APPLIED FOR RECOGNITION OF THE PLU AS A NEW PARTY.)

6 THE GOP MAY YET COME TO REGRET NOT STAYING OUT OF WHAT ALREADY WAS A SUFFICIENTLY SORRY MESS AMONG THE LIBERS), WHICH HAD SERVED TO DISCREDIT THEM WITH THE PUBLIC IN A MANNER THE GOP COULD NEVER HOPE TO MATCH. THE FACADE OF A GENUINE OPPOSITION HAS NOW BEEN SHATTERED. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT

CELAURO, IN EXCHANGE FOR BRIBES RECEIVED FROM THE GOP, WILL NOT  
BOYCOTT NEXT YEAR'S ELCTION(AS THE PLU AHD SAID IT MIGHT DO).  
THE MAJORITY LIBERAL FACTIONS HAVE ALREADY STARTED AN INTERNATIONAL  
CAMPAIGN TO DEPICT THEMSELVES AS VICTIMS OF POLITICAL AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

7. THE TEMPTATION TO INTERFERE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TOO GREAT  
FOR THE GOP WHICH IN ANY EVENT REMAINS HIGHLY INSENSITIVE IF NOT  
IMMUNE TO ITS REPUTATION ABROAD, AND THERE PROBABLY IS AN ELEMENT  
OF RETALIATION AND PERSONAL ANIMOSITY AGAINST THE PLU LEADERSHIP  
WHICH HAD EMBARRASSED STROESSNER BY REFUSING TO PLAY ALONG WITH THE  
CHARADE OF AMENDING THE CONSITUTION LAST MARCH TO ALLOW HIM TO  
BE REELECTED IN 1978.

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8. THE FOREGOING DETAILS ARE PROVIDED IN VIEW OF THE LIKELIHOOD  
THAT THE DEPARTMENT MAY RECEIVE INQUIRIES AS TO WHAT HAS HAPPENED  
TO THE TRANDITIONAL OPPOTION HERE. ESPEICALLY THE LEGAL SILENCING  
OF "EL RADICAL" -- PROBABLY VIEWED AS A FRINGE BENEFIT BY THE  
GOP, BUT NOT A PRIME REASON FOR ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIBERALS'  
WILL PROPERLY BE VIEWED IN THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD AS A STEP BACKWARDS.  
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